



St. Lucie County Legislative Update

Inside this issue:

Fracking	1
Planned Parenthood	1
Open Carry	2
KidCare	2
2018 Session	2

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Our Mission....

To provide service, infrastructure and leadership necessary to advance a safe and sustainable community, maintain a high quality of life, and protect the natural environment for all our citizens.

SENATE NOT TO HEAR FRACKING BILL UNTIL DEP PROVIDES ANSWERS

The appropriations committee chaired by Sen. Tom Lee, R-Brandon, will not hear a bill that authorizes fracking from the state until he hears "honest answers" from the Department of Environmental Protection about the plan, according to Mary Ellen Klas of The Times/Herald Tallahassee Bureau.

SB 318 allows the state to regulate and authorize the pumping of large volumes of water, sand and chemicals into the ground using high pressure to recover oil and gas deposits but allows the companies to shield from the public what chemicals are used by labeling them as "trade secrets."

"My frustration was the DEP was nowhere to be seen," Lee said. "I have told the stakeholders that I will not hear the bill in this committee until such time as the Department of Environmental Protection, which is our regulator, is prepared to come before this committee and answer questions on the record about provisions of that bill."

"We want credible, scientific responses to questions. Not special interest responses. And so I think a lot of people have concerns about a number of differences in the bill as it relates to our substrate made of limerock -- versus where fracking is going on in other places of the country -- as well as the preemption language and how there's no sunset to it."

He said he expects his committee "will ultimately agenda the bill" but "we will continue to work with the Department of Environmental Protection to try to get some straight answers."

HOUSE BUDGET WOULD BLOCK ALL STATE FUNDS FROM PLANNED PARENTHOOD

Leaders in the Florida House want to make sure no state money goes to Planned Parenthood.

At the top of the chamber's budget proposals for the Department of Health and the Agency for Health Care Administration are directions that "no funds...may be provided to Planned Parenthood" and "no recipients of funds...shall provide funding to Planned Parenthood directly or indirectly."

"I think it's the appropriate checks and balances that has to go on within the three branches of government," said Rep. Matt Hudson, R-Naples, the House's health care budget chairman. "And, frankly, I think it's the right thing to do."

The provision is not in the Senate's proposed budget.

But Senate Appropriations Chairman Tom Lee, R-Brandon, said it could come up as the two chambers negotiate differences in their budgets in conference committee.

"Well, I think there are a lot of our members -- lot of our conservative members in the Senate that would want to take a look at that issue," he said. "And if the House is raising it, it sounds like it might be a conference discussion that we're going to have whether members want to have it or not. So you know, put it on the list of things to talk about."

Watch Session Live:**Connect with
St. Lucie County!****Mark Satterlee**

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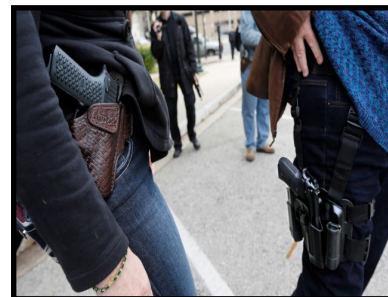
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**OPEN CARRY PASSES HOUSE FLOOR**

Concealed carry permit holders would be able to openly carry handguns -- as long as they are holstered and not just stuck down a waistband -- under a bill that passed the House floor.

Purses and other bags and containers would count as holsters under an amendment tacked on by the House Judiciary Committee. Concealed weapons would not need to be holstered. The amendment, which also limited open carry to handguns, came out of negotiations with the Florida Police Chiefs Association and is supported by the National Rifle Association.



Three sheriffs from rural counties were at the meeting and spoke in favor of open carry. But the Florida Sheriffs Association, in polling its membership, found 47 of 67 sheriffs did not support it. Another 10 did, and 10 did not vote.

In the Senate, the bill awaits a hearing in the Senate Judiciary Committee, where chair Miguel Diaz de la Portilla, R-Miami, effectively killed a bill to allow the carrying of concealed weapons on college campuses.

However, he has said he is more open to open carry and will schedule a hearing within the next week.

The full Senate also voted Thursday on several other firearms-related measures, including a bill to ban backyard gun ranges in areas with more than one resident per acre (SB 130), one to remove aggravated assault from the state's 10-20-Life law (SB 228), and another that explicitly places the burden of proof on prosecutors in Stand-Your-Ground hearings.

The backyard gun range and 10-20-Life bills passed unanimously, but the Stand Your Ground bill (SB 344) proved more controversial. The bill passed 24-12, but faces an uncertain future as it failed in a House committee.

KIDCARE EXPANSION PASSES FINAL COMMITTEE

The House Health & Human Services Committee passed a bill to remove the five-year waiting period for children of legal immigrants in Florida to be eligible for health care coverage through the Florida Kidcare Program.

HB 89, which has the vocal support of House Speaker Steve Crisafulli, now heads to the chamber floor.

There are about 17,000 children who will benefit if the ban is lifted. HB 89 includes an appropriation of nearly \$300,000 which will draw down more than \$28.5 million in federal funds to provide the care.

A similar Senate counterpart (SB 248) has one more committee stop.

HOUSE FILES BILL TO START 2018 SESSION IN JANUARY

A proposed bill by the House Government Operations Appropriations Subcommittee would have the 2018 legislative session again start in January instead of its traditional start time in March.

The Legislature would convene Jan. 9, 2018, under PCB GOAS 16-01.

The state constitution says the Legislature shall meet "the first Tuesday after the first Monday in March of each odd-numbered year, and on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in March, or such other date as may be fixed by law, of each even-numbered year."